Myriam of Lebanon

A lyrical philosophy of ambiance steadfastly established
on Gibran Khalil Gibran's *The Prophet*

Richard Mc Sweeney

Risteárd Mac Suibhne Uí Éire

MYRIAM OF LEBANON

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For further information on the author,

visit his website: http://www.rivers2c.com

Email: rich.etidings@gmail.com

To the Beloved Profundities of my life ~

Sung-ja my wife, son Richard, and daughter Iris

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Richard Mc Sweeney of the ancient and enigmatic isle of Éire writes on a variety of themes, but primarily on those to do with promoting beauty, good-naturedness, love of family, artistic expression, respect for the natural world, and cosmic considerations.

Having spent six edifying years as a seminarian with the Missionary Society of St. Columban, Richard came to the conclusion that his calling in life was to be sought elsewhere. Thus, journeying onwards with a great sense of gratitude and many happy memories he came to sojourn for some nine years in the Republic of Korea followed by three in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and a further three in the United Arab Emirates.

While in Korea he earned a master's degree in Chinese Philosophy from Seoul National University, and a bachelor's in Korean Language and Literature from Kyunggi University. Both of which were conducted entirely through the mediums of Korean and Classical Chinese. He holds a diploma in Philosophy & Arts from St. Patrick's College, Maynooth in the county Kildare.

Richard a native of Fermoy in the county Cork lives with his wife and two children in the idyllic border village of Tallow in the county Waterford.

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Risteárd Mac Suibhne Uí Éire

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Introduction

What greater honour can we bring to our teacher than to follow as closely as possible in his or her footsteps? In this way their spiritual fragrancy and intellectual refinement will always be us. My teacher among my teachers, Gibran Kahlil Gibran passed away seventy-five years ago this month. It was but last Friday, and I am saddened by the very thought of it. Only forty-eight, and in a hospital, and all alone too so far far away from his beloved hill country home of Bsharrī in Lebanon.

I have been asking myself what can I do for my teacher that will give a life in continuity to his memory; a presence in my own day and a promise and a fulfilment for the future? The more I have thought about this, the more I have come to realise that it is not so much the memory of the man himself that I have to keep alive (for that is already well secured), but rather the light within the man and the way in which he cultured it to express profound insights into the mystery we call Life. This is what makes him my teacher, in that he teaches me a way among the myriad ways of how to let my light within to shine more wonderfully without.

For nigh on thirty years Gibran's *The Prophet* has been with me. I have had it since my college days back on Éire [seminary days with the Missionary Society of St. Columban in Dalgan Park, county Meath] when I was first introduced to it while listening to a musical interpretation narrated by my fellow countryman the actor, singer and songwriter Richard Harris. [1] It has been with me for my years of study and teaching in the Far East and the Middle East respectively. Whenever I have been in need of solace and inspiration, I have turned to it and found it to have a welcome for me.

Yet, there was always something about it or perhaps even about me that prevented me somehow from experiencing its power at a deeper level. Strangely, it had at times the effect of even irritating me, and I would put it aside for days on end until it would call me back to again consider its words. I would then never be quite able to tell why it had irritated me so in the first place for now it would appear to be

so profound and beautiful. I came to the conclusion that it must have something to do with me, for being an Irishman it is not easy to take being preached at, be it from the pulpit, podium or a text. There is something about our inherited makeup which makes it even more difficult for us to accept those who would talk 'at' us rather than those who would talk 'with' us. This aside, *The Prophet* has been my constant companion.

> "The Qadisha valley-spirit of Lubnan Mountain ever lives in inspiration; inspiration's gateway being the issuer forth of ideas that nourish the needs of the times that be.
>
> Subtle she is almost like as if she were making no effort at all.
> Yet be she is most assuredly.
>
> Only those who lend themselves to patiently and reverently standing in dawns and twilights can begin to appreciate her profound generosity."

These words which are taken from the opening chapter of *Myriam of Lebanon* express with a fine clarity the heart of my present vision of life: the image of an eternal universal 'sentient' spirit that becomes present to us 'in particular places' within our respective natural environments and cultures that we in our hearts may come to know 'the Most Beloved', and in this knowing to live accordingly with beauty in expression, freedom in thought and magnificence in work. In the same words, we get an idea of the eternal universal spirit's presence in the world. Subtle she is almost like as if she weren't even there. And also we are told that only those with a special kind of sensitivity can begin to appreciate her profound generosity.

Socio-cultural

One of the most formidable challenges facing the world today, and particularly on the isle of Éire is that of the safeguarding of the last vestiges of our specific Irish moral character. We are finding it more and more difficult to hold on to what is best in our tradition while at the same time trying to keep up with the rapidly ever-changing world. The

press for the most part is in a state of moral free fall, in that it doesn't seem to have any benchmarks anymore even of its own from which to gauge what it will and will not publish. Rather the cry of the day is that sensationalism and scandal sell newspapers.

Our young people especially no longer have any clear moral guidance for their lives. Traditionally, the Catholic Church with its own unique interpretation and presentation of the exemplary moral teachings of Jesus of Galilee was accepted up until recently to be the passionate guardian of our moral integrity, but who of late it seems has all but abandoned this sacred duty. There is a feeling among many that the Catholic Church on Éire is in full retreat while a plethora of dubious, multi-denominational satellite and Internet broadcasts, with their virtual congregations are seen to be on the major offensive.

Yet, the Catholic Church albeit burdened by serious internal problems of its own cannot be held totally to blame for the present moral state of affairs on the island, for many who might have claimed to be believers have taken a great liking to the dazzling lights of materialism that modernity has to offer as well as impetuously tripping over themselves this way and that to convert or revert to other religions or cults which in practice may equally be as problematic as the Catholic Church, and in some cases even more so. And then there are the many elderly in the countryside and cities who stay with the faith, teachings, prayers and obligations of their childhood, and who don't bother themselves with the contemporary upheavals of the Church and society.

Although a veritable cornucopia of good words on how to live our lives morally have been poured before us for our consideration from the pulpit by joyous priests of genuine faith, love and respectability as well as lived by sisters and lay people alike, many people on the island have turned a deaf ear and a blind eye to them, preferring instead to look and point at those few miserable bullies among the clergy who knowingly tarnished the good name and moral teachings of the virtuous Galilean. Bullies have to be stopped in their tracks that goes without saying, and their victims given a

compassionate listening ear and an encouraging word to help them to help themselves overcome their heart-wrenching memories, but not at the expense of those eminently saintly joyful few among us, who in the given humdrumness of their daily lives are genuinely trying to be spiritual exemplars to all people.

All aspects considered, the people on the island, and not alone on the island have for the most part left themselves to be their own moral judges in the different situations encountered in their ordinary day-to-day lives. While this has a very healthy side to it, it more often than not puts too much pressure on the individual of whatever age they may be. Ethics has become an unknown country.

I have found myself asking, how might all these becloudments of the mind and as a consequence their frustration of the body be transcended once and for all? And where dwells in beauty a paraclete?

To such questions and the like, I have pondered with an idea (that I have had for some time) that most likely a joyous, bright, contemplative of heart, non-denominational woman's word would be more effective, and even more warmly received by people of the present Irish cultural clime, and even of the world clime than say a man's, especially, if she were perceived by them to be in every way exceedingly beautiful, and equally as important, if she were in melliferous voice and rhyme to talk 'with' them rather than 'at' them. For I take woman and paraclete to be synonymous as I do man and all-forgiving.

Christian

As a young boy growing up in a Catholic home on Éire, I was enchanted by the story of the birth of Jesus. There was something wonderfully mysterious about it. I loved the sense of security and cosiness that it gave me. And no one perhaps gave me that sense more than Jesus' mother, Mary. To me she appeared to be very courageous: bearing all things patiently. Her place in the nativity scene for me was central, if not even more central than that of the infant Jesus.

In my youth the family rosary was recited nightly after supper. It was a very special time when we would all kneel before the Sacred Heart painting which hung on the wall above the kitchen table to pray and reflect on the sacred mysteries of Jesus' life. I remember, however that it was the mysteries that had Mary as a focus that held my greatest attention: *The Annunciation*, *The Visitation*, and the powerful image of *The Crowing of Mary Queen of Heaven*. While Jesus always came across to me as being someone all about suffering, Mary, on the other hand came across as being all about joy.

There was the *Magnificat* also called the *Canticle of Mary*. This was a prayer that would only be said on special occasions such as feast days devoted to Mary or simply prayed on one's own whenever one needed to assure oneself of her protection. The prayer was a natural outpouring of what was presented in *The Angelus* – "My soul proclaims the greatness of God."

So much about this prayer touched me: "looked upon with favour", "has done great things for me", "has lifted up the lowly" as well as its overall joyful spirit and reminder of the bountiful blessings found in tradition.

My youth was also strongly influenced by the story of Lourdes. [2] There was something very wonderful about the idea of a visitor from Heaven appearing in the natural world, for I had grown up in the countryside.

Grottoes dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes were to be found everywhere both in the towns and in the countryside. People would stop and pray before them on their way to and from work or the marketplace. In a very tangible way we could feel Mary was somehow in our midst and watching over us. It was a comforting feeling for she always looked beautiful and happy. And there were often times when I out walking in the countryside, and would with passing along by natural caves in rocks or groves imagine this beautiful lady appearing there and speaking to me in a sweet and gentle voice.

Such were some of the precious Catholic experiences from my childhood years related to a certain Mary, namely Mary the mother of Jesus, and that had been *a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.* [3]

Celtic

One of the most powerful Celtic influences on my young mind was that of the pre-Christian story of *Oisín and the Land of Eternal Youth* (Tír na nÓg). This is the story of a young Celtic poet who is greatly loved by a beautiful maiden called Niamh, who one day comes on a majestic white horse from an unknown country way out in the Atlantic Ocean where no one ages and every one is eternally happy. After leaving the isle of Éire with her on the great white horse, Oisín earnestly desires after living three-hundred years in the Land of Eternal Youth to return just once, only once to Éire to see his parents, kin, friends and the land he loved so well.

The beautiful maiden by now his wife and mother of their children begged him not to go there for the Éire that used to be, she told him, now no longer existed. Seeing that he was determined to go, she lovingly admonished him that given any eventuality whatsoever he was not to dismount from the great white horse when on the isle of Éire, for to do so would mean that he would never be able to return to her, their children and the Land of Eternal Youth. With these words and a promise he returned to Éire with great excitement. However, while in the land of Éire he failed to pay full heed to his wife's loving admonition. And so his beautiful wife and children were never able to see him again.

I used to find myself asking "How would I feel if a beautiful maiden such as Niamh were to seek me out, and want for us to be together eternally in a place where everyone was forever young?" My answer (unlike that of Oisín's) would always be that however much I loved my parents, kin, friends and the land of Éire, I would not return to them but stay with my Niamh; keeping the memory of their love, and the beauty that is Éire ever alive in my heart

for that would feel to me to be the most natural thing in the world to do.

On the isle of Éire there are many holy wells where people in former times would go to pray and in particular to be healed of any physical ailments which they or family members might be experiencing. Originally these wells were old Celtic sacred places as were the rivers and streams, but with the coming of Christianity they were claimed for the Christian tradition and rededicated in time to some local Irish Christian saint such as St Brigid. [4]

On the first of February each year our family would pray especially to St. Brigid the Patroness of Éire as well as visit a local well dedicated to her. One custom was to place a pure white cloth outside on a tree or hedge on St. Brigid's Eve for her to visit during the night and touch it with her healing power. This cloth would be retained in the home throughout the year and touched to any members who would come down with some kind of sickness. There was also the making of a special type of cross made from fresh reeds gathered along the banks of a river. This would be hung on a wall in the kitchen for the coming year as a further reminder of St Brigid's protection.

Danannian

My Celtic influences would tend to be somewhat almost elusive in themselves as if they were pointing to something 'invisible' on the island or even to the island itself; something that predates the Celts own arrival there in circa 1st century BC.

This 'world invisible' I feel neither to be Celtic, Christian, or even Greek, and is something that does not lend itself easily either to the written or spoken word. If I were to give it a name, I would refer to it as the 'Tuatha Dé Danann': the (invisible) world of the people of Danu. [5]

I could easily imagine ancient Phoenician mariners of Byblos visiting the island in those centuries before the coming of the Celts, and referring to it perhaps as 'the beautiful isle of Baalat Danu': the beautiful isle of Lady Danu.

Lady Danu (Danann/Anann/Anu) is said to hide herself in the mists and float upon the winds as do her people. These are the invisible ancestral people that have existed on the island from ancient times, long ever before the coming of the Celts and the Christian faith (5th century). And who with the coming of the warrior tempered Celts and later their constraining Christian beliefs, choose to keep themselves to themselves that they may continue to enjoy their time-honoured way of life in the company of their Lady Danu.

There are however, certain days of the year or time of the day, or on starry or moonlit nights when the ambiance of land, sky and wind are of a world all of their own that the benevolent joyous presence of Lady Danu and her people can be felt in the heartland by those who have managed to retain some precious modicum of memory from those halcyon days; halcyon days when our ancient ancestors had cultured themselves to be more divinely human than humanly divine.

Should I try to describe Lady Danu in terms of my Christian, Celtic or Greek culturing alone, I would fail for I feel I can only best describe her with the help of some Taoist insights with respect to the mysterious Tao. [6] Although Lady Danu is not Tao, yet she may be said to have many of the characteristics of Tao.

> Close to me she is like the morning mists drifting o'er sleepy brooks.
> Courteous and charming as a host; respectful and joyous as a guest.
> Tentative to everything like one walking on an iced-over river in late winter.
> She touches my life, yet does not possess it; benefiting me as a mother without exacting any gratitude.
> Minutely subtle, yet profoundly responsive: gentle in nudging me to blunt my sharpnesses, untangle my knots, and to soften my glares.
> Hidden in the ancient she is, yet experienced in the ever-present becoming.

Philosophical Taoist

When I left my native shore some twenty-four years ago to make a life for myself in the Far East, I carried with me in my heart and mind my Christian, Celtic, Danannian heritage. With this 'heirloom' and Gibran's *The Prophet* as my constant companion, I felt I could go anywhere in the world and do very well. Yet, it was not until I encountered the profound insights of the Chinese Taoist philosopher-poet Chuang-tzu (c. 3rd century BC) that I realised how rigidly I had been using my mind up to then, when I had thought the contrary to be true.

Chuang-tzu in the difficult times in which he lived, had amazingly managed to culture himself to position his mind high above the human affairs of the world, like a great bird carefreely gliding about in order that he might be better able to view the problems of the world below, and as such be better able to offer some worthwhile suggestions on how best they might be dealt with. This is something very similar to what Gibran was doing in *The Prophet* when he said, "How could I have seen you save from a great height or a great distance?" From such heights he was able to seek out, "the secret of (their) joy and (their) pain" and be near to them by being at first far.

Chuang-tzu like Gibran displays a great freedom of thought and imagination. In the opening lines of the fourteenth chapter of his book of the same name *The Chuang-tzu* we get some idea of this as we read:

> "Does the sky turn around?
> Does the earth stand still?
> Do sun and moon compete for each other's positions?
> Who is there that brings this about?"
> Who directs it?
> Who has such leisure enough to see that such movements be sustained?" [7]

And again,

> "Is it the clouds which make the rain?

Or is it the rain which makes the clouds?
Who is there that makes it descend?
Who has leisure enough to see it keeps on frequently doing so?" [8]

And here too,

"Wind of a moment blows way down from the north.
It blows now east, now west; and now it takes to whirling aloft.
Who is there that puffs it forth?
Who has such leisure enough to be with flapping and fanning it this way and that?" [9]

According to Chuang-tzu there is never a moment when things in the universe are not in a process of change: transformation from metaphoric image to metaphoric image. Everything about us, including ourselves he sees as undergoing changes from one form to another, and having no beginnings and no endings. Everything, including ourselves 'begin' and 'end' like a circle, in which no part is anymore the beginning than another part is an ending, and nobody knows in what order they come. This Chuang-tzu puts forth as 'equality before nature': the natural boundaries in all things wherein transformation is forever taking place. [10]

When I took this unbounded way of thinking and applied it to *The Prophet* I found to my great delight a whole new and exciting world of possibilities spread out before me. But before we get to that, I first need to make mention of two very significant events which took place, one on Wednesday, the 4th February 1998 during a private 'pilgrimage' to Gibran's burial place in Mar Sarkis Monastery of Bsharrī, and the other in September of last year while reading *The Prophet* back home on Éire.

Encounter in Bsharrī

Having been patiently and impressively guided throughout each and every room of the museum by curator Waheeb Kairouz, I found myself down in the hewed crypt standing before Gibran's casket. I stood there in respectful silence (for I had longed for many years to be there), and in

that silence, I heard a voice; an unknown male's voice in English speaking to my heart these astonishing words:

> "Leave from here.
> There's only death in here.
> Be outside, and be with life."

These words I kept to myself for I knew not what to make of them.

Later having emerged from the museum, I stood alone there in the crisp spring air out front by the low stone wall, losing myself in reflection with gazing way down to my right at the valley-in-waiting, and up to my left at the snow-covered mountain. Lovely was the ambiance of land, sky and wind, and it had a certain familiarity about it, like that back on Éire when Lady Danu and her people are in the roving and the strolling. There and then, unto myself I knew for the very first time that I was in the presence of the spirit of that well-favoured place. I was in the presence of the Qadisha valley-spirit of Luban Mountain, and it felt good to be there.

With this realisation came in an instant the awareness of the company of a beauteous visitor from the world invisible; the company of a beauteous female visitor from the world of the Qadisha valley-spirit standing in silence beside me on my left, and smiling with me up at the mountain. And then there again, in moments of moments, I found myself to be in my own company. Who she was, I did not know, but verily, in her company great was my joy and sublime my peace.

Encounter in Tallow

Seven years were to pass by with the memory of that encounter ever fresh in my mind. I was never really sure what it meant or what I should do with it, other than to look back upon it with joyful appreciation. But that was all soon to change.

Last autumn, in the life-giving village of Tallow where I live back on Éire, I found myself for a particular reason to be in need of some solace and inspiration. And as is my

pleasure, I turned to *The Prophet* and there sure enough found a welcome.

On a compendium of September morns while sitting on this amiable seat up at the village's Pinegrove Sweep, and reading *The Prophet* I was recalling to mind that afternoon in Bsharrī, when the beauteous female visitor from the world of the Qadisha valley-spirit had come and stood beside me, and smiled with me up at the snow-covered mountain. Somewhere in the reading I was as if in a dream. And in that dream two things had happened. Almustafa the lonely banished 'island man' was no longer Almustafa, and the wording of the text had become much more personalised than it hitherto had ever been. A transformation had taken place and I was part of it for my customary bound up mind had become free of its entanglements, and the text itself had taken on a new life: a new metaphoric image, and I there did not know as of yet what to call it. But then there in that lovely place I came to know. I would call this new metaphoric image *Myriam of Lebanon.*

The spirit that had been named 'Almustafa' by Gibran had just been born anew and was to be called 'Myriam' after that beauteous visitor from the world of the Qadisha valley-spirit of Lubnan Mountain. She would be Myriam - a seeker and giver of knowledge from the celebrated land of Lebanon; that sapphire adorned land reclining there in contemplative beauty betwixt the calmly shimmering waters of the White Sea and the leisurely rippling sand dunes of the Golden Desert. The twilight of memory had given dawn to a new day in which to speak with a richer heart, and in words more akin to our thoughts.

Waking from my dreamlike state, I set about there and then to interweave the first draft of *Myriam of Lebanon* with having *The Prophet* (less the twelve illustrations) as my quintessential foundation and loom. I would respectfully glide in and of the marvellous literary designs, sublime moods and the picturesque situations so successfully employed by Gibran, while at the same time letting my own voice therein to find its own homecoming.

At long last I had been graced with a way in which to give a life in continuity to Gibran's view of the mystery we call Life; a view which was made possible for him through the eyes of his 'dawn unto his own day' namely, Almustafa. And in the process I too am being refreshed and made anew.

The socio-cultural problems facing the world, and in particular my native Éire, combined with a lifetime of beatific influences be they Christian, Celtic, Danannian or Taoist, and of encounters with the eternal universal spirit 'in particular places' such as the afore mentioned, in the 'landscapes' of Bsharrī and Tallow, and the 'textscape' of *The Prophet* well prepared me to apply myself with all integrity to the self-chosen, honourable and delicate task of transforming the metaphoric image *The Prophet* into the metaphoric image *Myriam of Lebanon*.

Gibran's *The Prophet* will always be with us in the memorable form that he first presented it to us, but assuredly he would never have wanted us to keep it frozen in time. Manuscripts in quest of a life in life delight in publication. Gibran was not one given to questing a life in death, but rather a life in life, as he himself reminds us -

> "Life, and all that lives, is conceived in the mist
> and not in the crystal.
> And who knows but a crystal is mist in decay?"

While *The Prophet* in all truth may be viewed as a living text that was conceived in the mists of time by the brilliance and sensitivity of Gibran, its very sustenance is now our responsibility. To fail to take this responsibility to heart is to let this his most precious living work crystallize and even decay. It would be analogous to depriving the spirit of the summer butterfly of catching a glimpse of the winter snows, and the spirit of the winter snows playing in the summer days of the butterfly.

We can give to Gibran's light within a life in continuity through the blessings and power of transformations. In this way, we can continue through the generations to enjoy walking in his footsteps, and learning according to his image and likeness in mood and style, of how to let our light within

shine without in the world of our own day. This is possibly one of the greatest compliments we can pay him, and one of the noblest endeavours we can set before ourselves that as his season of giving was his, our season now be ours, and in turn because of his and our brave efforts and integrity, our inheritors' seasons of giving can also be theirs. This beautiful and endearing work *Myriam of Lebanon* is a living expression of that dream; a dream born of the green fields of Éire and the snow-capped mountains of Lebanon.

In essence, this work is a genuine, authentic, and transparent attempt to construct in the foreground of our minds a regional paradigm bridge of beauty in expression, freedom in thought and magnificence in work between the ancient cultures of Éire and Lebanon, while in the alpine background and mirrored way up high and wide for all to see and live by an awe inspiring causeway of respect, harmony and shared endeavour between what may be generally spoken of as the philosophical Occident and the poetic Orient, and all be it thanks to the genius of Gibran Kahlil Gibran.

Once again, and this time in our own day is the ethos of the Phoenician and the Danannian worlds here within happily reunited. And all will be experienced to be very well indeed between these two tenacious, free-spirited, old maritime friends.

Adapted, and with slight modifications from a paper titled:

"Meeting in another dream - The Prophet reborn as Myriam of Lebanon"

Presented in person, and warmly received at an International Conference held in Lebanon (3-6 April 2006) honouring the 75th anniversary of Gibran Khalil Gibran's passing.

The Lebanese Minister of Culture, Dr Tarek Metri inaugurated the conference which was organized by the Faculty of Letters at the University Saint-Esprit de Kaslik [11] in collaboration with the Gibran National Committee of Lebanon.

References

[1] Richard Harris, *The Prophet,* album, 1974, also as audio CD, Atlantic/Wea, 1996

[2] Lady of Lourdes - In 1858, in the grotto of Massabielle, near Lourdes in southern France, a beautiful lady appeared 18 times to a young girl named Bernadette Soubirous. During the sixteenth apparition on March 25, 1858 the *Feast of the Annunciation* - when Bernadette asked her name, the beautiful lady replied with *"Je suis l'Immaculée Conception."*

[3] "A lamp to my feet is Thy word, And a light to my path." Psalm 119:105

[4] St. Brigid - Patroness of Éire. Feast Day 1st February. Brigid also known as Bride, Bridget and Brigit was born on Éire c. 450 and also died on Éire c. 525

[5] *Lebor Gabála Érenn: Book of the Taking of Éire.* vol. 4. ed. and tr. by R. A. S. Macalister. Dublin: Irish Texts Society, 1941. The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* was compiled between the ninth and the twelfth centuries on Éire. Ériu (Éire) is a daughter of the Danann and from whom Ireland in Gaeilge takes its name.

[6] *Tao Te Ching*, by Lao-tzu, tr. by Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English, Wildwood House Ltd., London, 1972

[7] James R. Ware, *The Sayings of Chuang Tzu*, Confucius Publishing Co., Taiwan, Chapter 14, 1972

[8] *Ibid.* Chapter 14

[9] *Ibid.* Chapter 14

[10] *Ibid.* Chapter 27

[11] http://yalibnan.com/site/archives/2006/04/a_historic_day.php

Tallow
15th August 2007

☼ 1 ~~~
The Dawnsong Annunciation

The Qadisha valley-spirit of Lubnan Mountain ever lives in inspiration; inspiration's gateway being the issuer forth of ideas that nourish the needs of the times that be.

Subtle she is almost like as if she were making
no effort at all.
Yet be she is most assuredly.

Only those who lend themselves to patiently and reverently standing in dawns and twilights can begin to appreciate her profound generosity.

Behold, hereupon is presented the Annunciation of the Qadisha valley-spirit of Lubnan Mountain, concerning Myriam the Beautiful; a fragrant scion from her upland groves.

In this scroll herewith, it is written for all to read in refined contemplation, and joyful anticipation, a goodly and timely message.

My Myriam my Beloved, who is my dawn and my fulfilment unto her own day, had waited seven years in my city isle of Éirelese for her ship that was to return and bear her back to my Lebanon, my land of her birth.

And in my seventh year, on my eight day of September, my month of reaping, she climbed my hill without my city walls and looked seaward; and she beheld her ship coming with my mist.

Then my gates of her heart were flung open, and her joy flew far out over my sea.

And she closed her eyes and prayed in my silences of her soul.

But as she descended my hill, my sadness came upon her, and she thought in her heart:

How shall I go in my peace and without my sorrow?
Nay, not without my wound in my spirit shall I leave this city.
Long were my days of pain I have spent within its walls, and long were my nights of aloneness; and who can depart from her pain and her aloneness without her regret?
Too many fragments of my spirit have I scattered in these streets, and too many are my children of my longing that walk leafless among these hills, and I cannot withdraw from them without my burden and my ache.
It is not my garment I cast off this day, but my skin that I tear with my own hands.
Nor is it my thought I leave behind me, but my heart made sweet with my hunger and with my thirst.

Yet I cannot tarry longer.
My sea that calls all things unto her calls me, and I must embark.
For to stay, though my hours burn in my night, is to languish and fossilise and be bound in my mould.
Fain would I take with me all that is here.
But how shall I?
My voice cannot carry my tongue and my lips that gave it my wings.
Alone must it seek my ether.
And alone and without her nest shall my eagle fly across my sun.

Now when she reached my foot of my hill, she turned again towards my sea, and she saw her ship approaching, and upon her prow my mariners, my women and men of her own land.

And her soul cried out to them, and she said:

My daughters and sons of my ancient mother, you riders of my tides,
How often have you sailed in my dreams.
And now you come in my awakening, which is my deeper dream.
Ready am I to go, and my eagerness with my sails full set awaits my wind.
Only another breath will I breathe in this still air, only another loving look cast backward,
And then I shall stand among you, your seafarer among your seafarers.

And you, my vast sea, my sleeping mother,
Who alone are my peace and my freedom to my river and my stream,
Only another winding will this stream make, only another murmur in this glade,
And then I shall come to you, your boundless drop to your boundless ocean.

And as she walked she saw from afar my women and my men leaving their fields and their orchards and their gardens, and hastening towards my city gates.
And she heard their voices calling her name, and shouting from my field to my field telling one another of the coming of her ship.

And she said to herself:

Shall my day of parting be my day of gathering?
And shall it be said that my eve was in truth my dawn?
And what shall I give unto him who has left his plough in his midfurrow, or to her who has stopped her rolling pin on her breadboard?
Shall my heart become my tree heavy-laden with my fruit that I may gather and give unto them?

And shall my desires flow like my fountain that I may fill their cups?
Am I their harp that our Most Beloved may touch me, or their flute that Her breath may pass through me?
My seeker of my silences am I, and what treasure have I found in my silences that I may dispense with confidence?
If this is my day of harvest, in what fields have I sowed my seed, and in what unremembered seasons?
If this indeed be my hour in which I lift up my lantern, it is not my flame that shall burn therein.
Empty and dark shall I raise my lantern,
And my guardian of my night shall fill it with my oil and she shall light it also.

These things she said in my words.
But much in her heart remained unsaid.
For she had not yet been taught my deeper secrets.

And when she entered into my city all my people came to meet her, and they were crying out to her as with one voice.

And my elders of my city stood forth and said:

Go not yet away from us.
Our noontide have you been in our twilight, and your youth has given us dreams to dream.
No stranger are you among us, nor our guest, but our daughter and our dearly beloved.
Suffer not yet our eyes to hunger for your face.

And my priests and sisters said unto her:

Let not our waves of our sea separate us now, and your years you have spent in our midst become our memory.
You have walked among us as spirit, and your shadow has been our light upon our faces.

Much have we loved you.
But speechless was our love, and with our veils has it been veiled.
Yet now it cries aloud unto you, and would stand revealed before you.
And ever has it been that our love knows not its own depth until its hour of separation.

And others came also and entreated her.
But she answered them not.
She only bent her head; and those who stood near saw her tears falling upon her bosom.

And she and my people proceeded towards my great square before my Temple.
And there came out of my sanctuary my faithful one whose name was Suibhne.
And he was my seer.
And she looked upon him with exceeding tenderness, for it was he who had first sought and believed in her when she had been but her first day in my city.

And he hailed her, saying:

Philosopher-poetess of our Most Beloved, in quest of our uttermost, long have you searched your distances for your ship.

And now your ship has come, and you must needs go.

Deep is your longing for your land of your memories and your dwelling-place of your greater desires; and our love would not bind you nor our needs hold you.

Yet this we ask ere you leave us, that you speak to us and give us of your truth.

And we will give it unto our children, and they unto their children, and it shall not perish.

In your aloneness you have watched with our days, and in your wakefulness you have listened to our weeping and our laughter of our sleep.

Now therefore disclose us to ourselves, and tell us all that has been shown you of that which is between our birth and our death.

And she answered:

People of Éirelese, of what can I speak save of that which is even now moving within your souls?

☼ 2 ~~~
My seer Suibhne asks of our Love

Then said my Suibhne, "Speak to us of our Love."

And she raised her head and looked upon my people, and there fell my stillness upon them.
And with her voice in my gentleness she said:

When our Most Beloved beckons to us, follow Her,
Though Her ways are hard and steep.
And when Her wings enfold us, yield to Her,
Though Her hailstones hidden in Her summer showers may wound us.
And when She speaks to us, believe in Her,
Though Her voice at times may shatter our dreams as our north wind lays waste our garden.

For even as Her love crowns us so shall She humble us.
Even as She is for our growth so She is for our pruning.
Even as She ascends to our height and caresses our tenderest branches that quiver in our sun,
So shall She descend to our roots and shake them in their clinging to our earth.

Like Her sheaves of corn She gathers us unto Herself.
She threshes us to make us stand alone.
She sifts us to free us from our husks.
She grinds us to whiteness.
She kneads us until we are pliant;
And then She assigns us to Her sacred fire, that we may become Her sacred bread for Her sacred feast.

All these things shall Her love do unto us that we may know Her secrets of our heart, and in that knowledge become Her fragrancy of Life's heart.

But if in our fear we would seek only Her peace and Her pleasure,
Then it is better for us that we cover our shamefulness and pass out of Her threshing-floor,
Into our seasonless world where we shall laugh, but not all of our laughter, and weep, but not all of our tears.

Her love gives naught but Herself and takes naught but from Herself.
Her Love possesses not nor would it be possessed;
For Her love is sufficient unto Her love.

When we love we should not say,
"Our Most Beloved is in my heart,"
but rather,
"Our Most Beloved in my heart I am."

And think not we can direct our course of Her love, for our Most Beloved, if She finds us worthy, directs our course.

Her love has no other desire but to fulfil itself.

But if we love and must needs have our desires, let these be our desires:

To melt and be like our running brook that sings its melody to our night.

To know our pain of too much tenderness.

To be wounded by our own understanding of our love;

And to yield willingly and joyfully.

To wake at our dawn with our winged heart and give thanks for another day of loving;

To rest at our noon hour and meditate our love's ecstasy;

To return home at our eventide with our gratitude;

And then to sleep with our prayer for our Most Beloved in our heart, and our song of praise upon our lips.

☼ 3 ~~~
My seer Suibhne asks of our Marriage

Then my Suibhne spoke again and said, "And what of our Marriage, my teacher?"

And she answered saying:

We were born together, and together we shall be for evermore.
We shall be together when our white wings of our death scatter our days.
Aye, we shall be together even in our silent memory of our Most Beloved.
But let there be our spaces in our togetherness.
And let our winds of our heavens dance between us.

Let us love one another, but make not our bond of our love:
Let it rather be our moving sea between our shores of our souls.
Let us fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup.
Let us give one another of our bread but eat not from our same morsel.
Let us sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one be alone, even as our strings of our lute are alone though they quiver with our same music.

Let us give our hearts, but not into each other's keeping.
For only Life's hand can contain our hearts.
And let us stand together yet not too near together:
For our pillars of our temple stand apart,
And our cedar tree and our oak grow not in each other's

shadow.

☼ 4 ~~~
My woman with babe upon her bosom asks of our Children

And my woman who held her babe against her bosom said, "Speak to us of our Children."

And she said:

Our children are our children, and as our sons and daughters are they of Life's longing for itself.
They come through us but not from us,
And though they are with us, yet they are not our possession.

We may give them our love but not our thoughts,
For they have their own thoughts.
We may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in their house of tomorrow, which we cannot visit, not even in our dreams.
We may strive to be like them, but let us seek not to make them like us.
For our life goes not backward nor tarries with our yester day.

We are our rainbows from which our children as living arrows are sent forth.
Our Archer sees Her mark upon Her path of Her infinite, and She bends us with Her might that Her arrows may go swift and far.
Let our bending in our Archer's hand be for our gladness;
For even as She loves Her arrows that fly, so She loves also Her rainbows that are stable.

☼ 5 ~~~
My man of great wealth asks of our Giving

Then said my man of great wealth, "Speak to us of our Giving."

And she answered:

We give but little when we give of our possessions.
It is when we give of ourselves that we truly give.
For what are our possessions but things we keep and guard for fear we may need them tomorrow?
And our tomorrow, what shall our tomorrow bring to our over prudent dogfish burying bones in our trackless waters as he follows our pilgrims to our holy places?

And what is fear of our need but our need itself?
Is not dread of our thirst when our well is full, our thirst that is unquenchable?

There are those of us who give little of our much which we have, and we give it for our recognition and our hidden desire makes our gifts unwholesome.
And there are those of us who have little and give it all.
These are our believers in life and our bounty of life, and their wellspring never runs dry.
There are those of us who give with our joy, and that joy is our reward.
And there are those of us who give with our pain, and that pain is our blessing.

And there are those of us who give and know not our pain in giving, nor do we seek our joy, nor give with our mindfulness of virtue;

We give as in our yonder valley our lily breathes its fragrancy into our space.
Through our hands and as such as these our Most Beloved speaks, and from behind our eyes She smiles upon Her earth.

It is well to give when asked, but it is better to give unasked, through understanding;
And to our open-handed our search for one who shall receive is joy greater than giving.
And is there aught we would withhold?
All we have shall some day be given;
Therefore let us give now, that our season of giving may be ours and not our inheritors'.

We often say, "I would give, but only to my deserving."
Our trees in our orchard say not so, nor our flocks in our pasture.
They give that they may live, for to withhold is to perish.

Surely he who is worthy to receive his days and his nights is worthy of all else from us.
And he who has deserved to drink from our ocean of life deserves to fill his cup from our little stream.
And what desert greater shall there be, than that which lies in our courage and our confidence, nay our charity of receiving?
And who are we that others should rend their bosom and unveil their pride, that we may see their worth undressed and their pride unabashed?

See first that we ourselves deserve to be our giver, and our instrument of giving.
For in truth it is life that gives unto life, while we, who deem ourselves our givers, are but our witnesses.

And we receivers, and we are all receivers, let us assume no weight of gratitude, lest we lay our harness

upon ourselves and upon him who gives.
Rather rise together with our giver on his gifts as on his wings;
For to be overmindful of our debt is to doubt his generosity who has our openhanded heavens for mother and our freehearted earth for father.

☼ 6 ~~~
My baker of bread asks of our Eating and Drinking

Then my baker of bread said, "Speak to us of our Eating and Drinking."

And she said:

Would that we could live on our fragrancy of our earth, and like our air plant be sustained by our light. But since, we must needs be as of yet, deprive of life, and take from life to nourish our bodies and quench our thirst, let it then be our act of respect and gratitude, In which on our humble table stands our modest basket filled with the blessings of our river and sea, and our forest and meadow.

Thusly receive.

A time is coming however when no longer we will feel our need to be depriving and taking from life, And that welcome day of purity and innocence will soon be with us.

When we partake of our rains and our dews, let us say to them in our heart,

"Your droplets shall live in my body,
And your mists of your tomorrow shall float in my heart,
And your fragrancy shall be my breath,
And together we shall rejoice through all our seasons."

And in our autumn days, when we gather our golden wheat of our fields for our flower mills, and our

fresh fruits of our trees for our pantries, let us say in our heart,

"I too am our Most Beloved's field and tree, and my grains and my fruit shall be gathered for Her flower mills and Her pantries,
And like Her rich fruitcakes, I shall be kept fresh in Her eternal cupboards."

And when with passing through our winter solstice, as is our custom we come to slice our fresh fruitcakes, let there be in our heart our joyful song for each savouring bite;
And let there be in our song our remembrance for our autumn days, and for our golden wheat fields, and our bountiful fruit trees,
And for our fragrancies of our flower mills and our pantries.

☼ 7 ~~~
My farmer asks of our Work

Then my farmer said, "Speak to us of our Work."

And she answered, saying:

We work that we may keep pace with our earth and our soul of our earth.
For to be idle is to become our stranger unto our seasons, and to step out of life's procession that marches in majesty and proud submission towards our infinite.

When we work we are our flute through whose heart our whispering of our hours turns to music.
Which of us would be our reed, dumb and silent, when all else sings together in unison?

Always we have been told that work is our curse and labour our misfortune.
But I say, that when we work we fulfil our part of our earth's furthest dream, assigned to us when that dream was born,
And in keeping ourselves with labour we are in truth loving life,
And to love life through our labour is to be intimate with life's inmost secret.

But if we in our pain call birth our affliction and our support of our flesh our curse written upon our brow, then I answer that naught but our sweat of our brow shall wash away that which is written.

We have been told also that life is darkness, and in our weariness we echo what was said by our weary.
And I say that life is indeed our darkness save when

there is our yearning,
And all our yearning is blind save when there is our knowledge.
And all our knowledge is vain save when there is our work,
And all our work is empty save when there is our love;
And when we work with our love we bind ourselves to ourselves, and to one another, and to our Most Beloved.

And what is it to work with our love?
It is to weave our cloth with threads drawn from our heart, even as if our beloved were to wear that cloth.
It is to build our house with affection, even as if our beloved were to dwell in that house.
It is to sow our seeds with tenderness and reap our harvest with joy, even as if our beloved were to eat our fruit.
It is to charge all things we fashion with our breath of our own spirit,
And to know that all our blessed departed are about us, and looking favourably upon us.

Often have I heard among you those who would say, as if speaking in their sleep,

"He who works in our marble, and finds his shape of his own soul therein, is nobler than he who ploughs our soil.
And she who seizes our rainbow to lay it on her canvas in her likeness of herself, is more than she who makes our sandals for our feet."

But I say, not in our sleep, but in our over-wakefulness of noontide, that our wind stream speaks not more sweetly to our giant oaks than to our humblest blades of grass;
And we alone are great who turn our voice of our wind stream into our song made sweeter by our own loving.

Our work is our love made visible.
And if we cannot work with our love but only with our distaste, it is better that we should leave our work and sit at our gate of our temple and take alms of those who work with joy.
For if we grudge our grinding of our grains, our grudge distils our poison in our flower.
And if we bake our bread with our indifference, we bake our bitter bread that feeds but half our hunger.
And if we sing though as songbirds, and love not our singing, we muffle our ears to our voices of our day and our voices of our night.

☼ 8 ~~~
My janitor asks of our Joy and Sorrow

Then my janitor said, "Speak to us of our Joy and Sorrow."

And she answered:

Our joy is our sorrow unmasked.
And our selfsame well from which our laughter rises was oftentimes filled with our tears.
And how else can it be?
Our sorrow's depths are our joy's waterways, as are our ravines among our ancient hills.

Is not our bowl that holds our soup our very bowl that we burned in our potter's oven?
And is not our lute that soothes our spirit our very wood that we hollowed with augers?

When we are joyous, let us look deep into our heart and we shall find it is only that which has given us our sorrow that is giving us our joy.
When we are sorrowful, let us look again in our heart, and we shall see that in truth we are weeping for that which has been our delight.

Some of us say,

"Our joy is greater than our sorrow,"
and others say,
"Nay, it is our sorrow."

But I say, they are inseparable.
Together they come and go, and when one sits alone with us at our table, let us remember its companion is asleep upon our bed.

Verily we are suspended like scales between our sorrow and our joy.
Only when we are empty are we at our standstill and balanced.
When our treasure-keeper lifts us to weigh Her gold and Her silver, needs must our joy or our sorrow rise or fall.

☼ 9 ~~~
My builder asks of our Houses

Then my builder came forth and said, "Speak to us of our Houses."

And she answered and said:

Let us build of our imaginings our bower in our wilderness ere we build our house within our city walls. For even as we have homecomings in our twilight, so has our wanderer in us, our ever distant and our ever alone.
Our house is our larger body.
It grows in our sun and sleeps in our stillness of our night; and it is not dreamless.
Does not our house dream?
And dreaming, leave our city for our grove or hilltop?

Would that we could gather our houses into our hands, and like our sowers scatter them in our forest and meadow.
Would that our valleys were our streets, and our green paths our alleys, that we might seek one another through our orchards, and come with our fragrancy of our earth in our garments.

But these things are not yet to be.

In their fear our foreparents gathered us too near together.
And that fear shall endure a little longer.
A little longer shall our city walls separate our hearths from our fields.

And tell me, people of Éirelese, what have we in these houses?

And what is it we guard with fastened doors?

Have we our peace, our quiet urge that reveals our power?

Have we our remembrances, our glimmering arches that span our summits of our mind?

Have we our beauty, that leads our heart from our things fashioned of our wood and our stone to our holy mountain?

Tell me, have we these in our houses?

Or have we only our comfort, and our lust for our comfort, that stealthy thing that enters our house our guest, and then becomes our host, and then our lord?

Aye, and it becomes our subduer, and with its hooks and scourges makes its puppets of our larger desires.

Though its hands are silken, its heart is of iron.

It lulls us to our sleep only to stand by our bed and jeer at our dignity of our flesh.

It makes its mockery of our sound senses, and lays them like fragile vessels in its thistledown, only to wait to see them break.

Verily our lust for our comfort destroys our passion of our soul, and then walks grinning in our funeral cortege.

But we, our children of our space, we restless in our rest, we shall not be trapped nor subdued.

Our house shall be not our anchor but our mast.

It shall not be our glistening film that covers our wound, but our eyelid that guards our eye.

We shall not fold our wings that we may pass through our doors, nor bend our heads that they strike not against our ceiling, nor fear to breathe lest our walls should crack and fall down.

We shall not dwell in our sepulchres made by our dead for our living.

And though of our magnificence and our splendour, our house shall not hold our secret nor shelter our longing.

For that which is boundless in us abides in our mansion of our sky, whose door is our morning mist, and whose windows are our songs and our silences of our night.

☼ 10 ~~~
My weaver asks of our Clothes

And my weaver said, "Speak to us of our Clothes."

And she answered:

Our clothes conceal much of our beauty, yet they hide not our unbeautiful.
And though we seek in our garments our freedom of our privacy we may find in them our harness and our chain.

Would that we could meet our sun and our wind with more of our skin and less of our raiment.
For our breath of life is in our sunlight and our hand of life is in our wind.

Some of us say,

"It is our north wind who has woven our clothes we wear."

And I say,

Aye, it was our north wind,
But shame was his loom, and our softening of our sinews was his thread.
And when his work was done he laughed in our forest.

Forget not that our modesty is for our shield against our eye of our unclean.

And when our unclean shall be no more, what were our modesty then but our fetter and our fouling of our mind?

And forget not that our earth delights to feel our bare feet, and our winds long to play with our hair.

☼ 11 ~~~
My merchant asks of our Buying and Selling

And my merchant said, "Speak to us of our Buying and Selling."

And she answered and said:

To us our earth yields her fruit, and we shall not want if we but know how to fill our hands.
It is in exchanging our gifts of our earth that we shall find our abundance and be satisfied.
Yet unless our exchange be in our love and in our kindly justice it will but lead some to greed and others to hunger.

When in our marketplace we toilers of our sea and our fields and our orchards meet our weavers and our potters and our gatherers of spices,
Let us invoke then our Most Beloved, to come into our midst and sanctify our scales and our reckoning that weighs our value against our value.

And suffer not our barren-handed to take part in our transactions, who would sell their words for our labour.

To such people we should say,

"Come with us to our field, or go with our brothers to our sea and cast your net;
For our land and our sea shall be bountiful to you even as to us."
And if there come our singers and our dancers and our flute players, let us buy of their gifts also.

For they too are our gatherers of our fruit and our fragrancy, and that which they bring, though fashioned of their dreams, is our raiment and our food for our souls.

And before we leave our marketplace, see that no one has gone his way with his hands empty.
For our Most Beloved shall not sleep peacefully till Her needs for all of us are satisfied.

☼ 12 ~~~
My judge asks of our Crime and Punishment

Then one of my judges of my city stood forth and said, "Speak to us of our Crime and Punishment."

And she answered, saying:

It is when our spirit goes wandering upon our wind,
That we, alone and unguarded, commit our wrong unto others and therefore unto ourselves.
And for that wrong committed must we knock and wait a while unheeded at our gate of our Most Beloved.

Like our ocean is our divine-self;
It remains for ever undefiled.
And like our ether it lifts but our winged.
Even like our sun is our divine-self;
It knows not our ways of our earthworms nor seeks it out our hollows of our foxes.

But our divine-self dwells not alone in us.
Much in us is still human-self, and much in us is not yet human-self,
But our shapeless diminutive-self that floats asleep upon our wind searching for its own awakening.
And that of our not yet human-self in us, would I now speak.
For it is this one, and not our divine-self nor our diminutive-self upon our wind that knows our crime and our punishment of crime.

Oftentimes have I heard us speak of one who commits his wrong as though he were not one of us, but

our stranger unto us and our intruder upon our world.
But I say that even as our holy and our virtuous cannot rise beyond our highest which is in each one of us,
So our wicked and our weak cannot fall lower than our lowest which is in us also.
And as our single leaf turns not yellow but with our silent knowledge of our whole tree,
So our wrong-doer cannot do wrong without our hidden will of us all.

Like our procession we walk together towards our divine-self.

We are our way and our wayfarers.
And when one of us falls down he falls for those of us behind him, our caution against our stumbling stone.
Aye, and he falls for those of us ahead of him, who, though faster and surer of foot, yet removed not our stumbling stone.

And this also, though my word lies heavy upon your hearts:
Our murdered is not unaccountable for his own murder,
And our robbed is not blameless in being robbed.
Our virtuous is not innocent of our deeds of our wicked,
And our white-handed is not clean in our doings of our fraudster.

Yea, our guilty is oftentimes our victim of our injured.
And still more often our condemned is our burden bearer for our guiltless and our unblamed.
We cannot separate our just from our unjust and our good from our wicked;
For they stand together before our face of our sun even as our various threads are woven together. And should one of our threads discolour, break or come undone, our Weaver shall look into Her whole cloth, and She shall examine Her loom also.

If any of us would bring to judgment our unfaithful husband,
Let us also weigh our heart of his wife in our scales, and measure our soul of hers with our measurements.

And let us who would lock up our offender look unto our spirit of our offended.

And if any of us would punish in our name of our virtuousness and lay our axe unto our evil tree, let us see to its roots;
And verily we will find our roots of our very good, our good and our not so good, our fruitful and our fruitless, all entwined together in our silent heart of our earth.

And we judges who would be just.
What judgment pronounce we upon her who though honest in her flesh yet is her thief in her spirit?
What penalty lay we upon her who slays in her flesh yet is herself slain in her spirit?
And how prosecute we him who in his action is his deceiver and his oppressor,
Yet who also is his aggrieved and his outraged?

And how shall we punish those of ours whose remorse is already greater than their misdeeds?
Is not our remorse our justice which is administered by that very law which we would fain serve?
Yet we cannot lay our remorse upon our innocent nor lift it from our heart of our guilty.
Unbidden shall it call in our night, that we may wake and gaze upon ourselves.

And we who would understand our justice, how shall we unless we look upon all our deeds in our fullness of light?
Only then shall we know that our upright and our fallen are but our one person standing in her twilight between

her night of her diminutive-self and her day of her divine-self,
And that our corner-stone of our temple is not higher than our lowest stone in its foundation.

☼ 13 ~~~
My enforcer of laws asks of our Laws

Then my enforcer of laws said, "But what of our Laws?"

And she answered:

We delight in laying down our laws,
Yet we delight more in breaking them.
Like our children playing by our ocean who build our sand-towers with constancy and then destroy them with laughter.
But while we build our sand-towers our ocean brings more sand to our shore,
And when we destroy them our ocean laughs with us.
Verily our ocean laughs always with our innocent.

But what of those of us to whom life is not our ocean, and our man-made laws are not our sand-towers,

But to whom life is our rock, and our law our chisel with which we would carve it in our own likeness?

What of our cripple who hates our dancers?

What of our grumpy old ox who loves his yoke and deems our elk and our deer of our forest stray and vagrant things?

What of our aging feline who bemoans her past and begrudges beauty in curve and demeanour to her protégé?

And what of them who come early to our wedding-feast, and when over-fed and tired go their way saying

that all our feasts are our violation and all our feasters our law-breakers?

What shall we say of these save that they too stand in our sunlight, but with their backs to our sun?

They see only their shadows, and their shadows are their laws.

And what is our sun to them but their caster of their shadows?

And what is it to acknowledge their laws but to stoop down and trace their shadows upon our earth?

But we who walk facing our sun, what images drawn on our earth can hold us?

We who travel with our wind, what weather vane shall direct our course?

What clique's law shall bind us if we break our restraints but upon no one's prison door?

What laws shall we fear if we dance but stumble against no one's iron chains?

And who is he that shall bring us to judgment if we remove our garment yet leave it in no one's path?

People of Éirelese, we can muffle our drum, and we can loosen our strings of our harp, but who shall command our gratifying song thrush not to sing?

☼ 14 ~~~
My politician asks of our Freedom

And my politician said, "Speak to us of our Freedom."

And she answered:

At our city gate and by our fireside, I have seen us prostrate ourselves and worship our own freedom,
Even as our slaves humble themselves before our tyrant and praise him though he slays them.

Aye, in our grove of our temple and in our shadow of our hill, I have seen our freest among us wear their freedom as their harness and their fetter.
And my heart ached within me; for we can only be free when even our desire of seeking our freedom becomes our harness to us, and when we cease to speak of our freedom as our goal and our fulfilment.
We shall be free indeed when our days are not without our care nor our nights without our want and our grief,
But rather when these things encircle our life and yet we rise above them valiant and unbound.

And how shall we rise beyond our days and our nights unless we break our chains which we at our dawn of our understanding have fastened around our noon hour?
In truth that which we call our freedom is our strongest of these chains, though its links glitter in our sun and dazzle our eyes.

And what is it but our fragments of our own self we would discard that we may become free?
If it is our unjust law we would abolish, that law was written with our own hand upon our own forehead.

We cannot erase it by burning our law books nor by washing our foreheads of our judges, though we pour our sea upon them.

And if it is our magisterium we would remove from our life, see first that its throne erected within us is levelled.
For how can our narrow-minded rule our free and our proud, but for our narrow-mindedness in our own freedom and our shame in our own pride?
And if it is our care we would cast off, that care has been chosen by us rather than imposed upon us.

And if it is our fear we would dispel, our seat of that fear is in our heart and not in our hand of our feared.

Verily, all things move within us in our constant half embrace, our desired and our dreaded, our repugnant and our cherished, our pursued and that which we would escape.

These things move within us as our lights and our shadows in pairs that cling.

And when our shadow fades and is no more, our light that lingers becomes our shadow to another light.

And thus, our freedom when it loses its restraints becomes itself our restraint of our greater freedom.

☼ 15 ~~~
My visiting village hermit asks of our Reason and Passion

And my visiting village hermit, came forth and said, "Speak to us of our Reason and Passion."

And she answered, saying:

Our soul is oftentimes like our seasonal playfield, upon which our reason and our judgment compete against our passion and our appetite.

Would that we could be our magnanimous referee in our soul, that we might turn our discord and our rivalry of our elements into our oneness and our melody.

But how shall we, unless we be also our lovers of all our elements?

Our reason and our passion are our rudder and our sails of our seafaring soul.

If either our sails or our rudder be broken, we can but toss and drift, or else be held at our standstill in our mid-seas.

For our reason, ruling alone, is our force confining; and our passion, unattended, is our flame that burns to its own destruction.

Therefore let our soul exalt our reason to our height of our passion, that it may sing;

And let it direct our passion with our reason, that our passion may live through its own daily renaissance, and like our butterfly rise above its ruin.

I would have us consider our judgment and our appetite even as we would two loved guests in our house.

Surely we would not honour our one guest above our other; for he who is more mindful of one loses his love and his faith of both.

Among our hills, when we sit in our cool shade of our beeches and elms, sharing our peace and our serenity of our distant fields and our meadows,

Then let our heart say in our silence,

"Our Most Beloved rests in our reason."

And when our storm comes, and our mighty wind shakes our forest, and our thunder and our lightning proclaim our majesty of our sky,

Then let our heart say in awe,

"Our Most Beloved moves in our passion."

And since we are Her breath, and Her leaf in Her forest, we too should rest in our reason and move in our passion.

☼ 16 ~~~
My old mother of fishermen asks of our Pain

And my old mother of fishermen said, "Speak to us of our Pain."

And she said:

Our pain is our breaking of our shell that encloses our understanding.

Even as our stone of our fruit must break, that its heart may stand in our sun, so must we know our pain.

And could we keep our heart in wonder at our daily miracles of our life, our pain would not seem less wondrous than our joy;

And we would accept our seasons of our heart, even as we have always accepted our seasons that pass over our fields.

And we would watch with our tranquillity through our winters of our grief.

Much of our pain is self-chosen.

It is our bitter potion by which our physician within us heals our sick self.

Therefore let us trust our physician, and drink her remedy in our silence and our peace:

For her hand, though steadfast, is guided by our Most Beloved's tenderness,

And her elixir cup, though it bitters our tongue, has been fashioned of our clay which our Potter has moistened with Her own sweet-salted tears.

☼ 17 ~~~
My moody bully attendant asks of our Self-knowledge

And my moody bully attendant of my children's ward elbowed himself forth saying, "Speak to us of our Self-knowledge."

And she answered, saying:

Our hearts know in our silence our secrets of our days and our nights.

But our ears thirst for our sound of our heart's knowledge.

We would know in our words that which we have always known in our thought.

We would touch with our fingers our velvet face of our dreams.

And it is well we should.
Our hidden well-spring of our soul must needs rise and run murmuring to our sea;
And our treasure of our infinite depths would be revealed to our eyes.

But let there be no scales to weigh our unknown treasure;
And let us seek not our depths of our knowledge with our staff or our sounding line.
For self is our sea boundless and measureless.

Say not, "I have found my truth,"
Say rather,

"I have found our truth."

Say not, "I have found my path of my soul."
Say rather,

"I have met my soul walking upon our path."

For our soul walks upon all our paths.

Our soul walks not upon our line, neither does it grow like our reed.
Our soul unfolds itself, like our heavenly stars of countless petals.

People of Éirelese this profound self-knowledge would I have you wear with pride and courage in your hearts - that your youth and your spirit is greater by far than your Joyce, and not that your Joyce is by far your greater.

For so it is in my land of my Lebanon - that our youth and our spirit is greater by far than our Gibran, and not that our Gibran is by far our greater.

Arise off your calloused knees people of Éirelese, and happily be with making your own mythologies;

For our days and our nights will not be less generous to you than to my strong-spirited, joyful and youthful-hearted Lebanese.

☼ 18 ~~~
My bright principal asks of our Teaching

Then said my bright, loving, female primary school principal, "Speak to us of our Teaching."

And she said:

No one can reveal to us aught but that which already lies half asleep in our dawning of our knowledge.

Our teacher who walks in our shadow of our temple, among her followers, gives not of her wisdom but rather of her faith and her lovingness.

If she is indeed wise she does not bid us enter her house of wisdom, but rather leads us to our threshold of our own mind.

Our astronomer may speak to us of his understanding of our space, but he cannot give us his understanding.

Our musician may sing to us of our rhythm which is all about, but she cannot give us her ear which arrests our rhythm, nor her voice that echoes it.

And he who is versed in our science of numbers can tell of our regions of weight and measure, but he cannot conduct us thither.

For each person's vision has a lyric and an ambiance all of its own.

Yet, I would have us consider that our Most Beloved's knowledge of each one of us is in company, and in company are we to be in our knowledge of our Most Beloved,

And in our understanding of each other, our earth and our heavens.

☼ 19 ~~~
My university youth asks of our Friendship

And my university youth said, "Speak to us of our Friendship."

And she answered, saying:

Our friend is our needs answered.

He is our field which we sow with our love and reap with our thanksgiving.

And he is our table and our fireside.

For we come to him with our hunger, and we seek him for our peace.

When our friend speaks his mind we fear not his "nay" in our own mind, nor do we withhold our "aye."

And when he is silent our heart ceases not to listen to his heart;

For without our words, in our friendship, all our thoughts, all our desires, all our expectations are born and shared, with our joy that is unclaimed.

When we part from our friend, we grieve not;

For that which we love most in him may be clearer in our absence from him, as our river to our fisherman is more inviting from its banks.

And let there be more to our mystery of friendship than merely our deepening of our knowledge and our wisdom,

Let there be our deepening of our honour.

And let our very best be for our friend.

If he must know our ebb of our tide, let him know its flow also.

For what is our friend that we should seek him to waffle away our hours?

Seek him always with our hours to listen, to encourage and to share.

For it is his to fill our need, but not our emptiness.

And in our friendship let there be our hearty laughter, our lonely tears, and our sharing of our pleasures.

For in our dew of respectful ways our heart will find its morning and be refreshed.

☼ 20 ~~~
My seasoned gossiper asks of our Talking

And then my seasoned gossiper said, "Speak of our Talking."

And she answered, saying:

We talk when we cease to be at peace with our thoughts;

And when we can no longer dwell in our solitude of our heart we live in our lips, and our sound is our diversion and our pastime.

And in much of our talking, our thinking is half suffocated.

For our thought is our bird of space, that in our cage of words may indeed unfold its wings but cannot fly.

There are those among us who seek our talkative through fear of being alone.

Their silence of their aloneness reveals to their eyes their helpless selves and they would escape.

And there are those of us who talk, and without our knowledge or our forethought reveal our truth which we ourselves do not understand.

And there are those of us who have our truth within us, but we tell it not in our words.
In our bosom our spirit dwells in rhythmic silence.

When we meet our friend on our roadside or in our marketplace, let our spirit in us move our lips and direct our tongue.

Let our voice within our voice speak to his ear of his ear;

For his soul will keep our truth of our heart as his scent of our garden is remembered,

When its arrangement is forgotten and its walls are no more.

☼ 21 ~~~
My astronomer asks of our Time

And my astronomer said, "What of our Time?"

And she answered:

We would measure time our measureless and our immeasurable.

We would adjust our conduct and even direct our course of our spirit according to our hours and our seasons.

Of time we would make our river upon whose bank we would sit, and watch, and comment on its never-ending flowing.

Yet our timeless in us is aware of life's evanescence,

And knows that our yesterday is but our today's memory and our tomorrow is our today's dream.

And that which sings and contemplates in us is beyond all our yesterdays and all our tomorrows; dwelling in our stars and galaxies worlds without end.

Who among us does not feel that her power to love is boundless?

And yet who does not at times feel that very love, though boundless, encompassed within her bosom?

Such too may be our understanding of time.

But if in our thought we must measure our time into our moments, then let each moment dance and sing with all our other moments,

And with our grateful remembrance, let our moments of our present embrace our moments of our past,

And with our grateful longing, let our moments of our past embrace our moments of our present and our moments of our future.

☼ 22 ~~~
My medical ethics consultant asks of our Good and Evil

And my medical ethics consultant said, "Speak to us of our Good and Evil."

And she answered:

Of our good in us I can speak, but not of our evil.
For what is our evil but our good tortured by its own hunger and thirst?
Verily when our good is hungry it seeks its food even in our clogged up drains, and when it thirsts it drinks even of our stagnant hollows.

We are our good when we are at one with ourselves.
Yet when we are not at one with ourselves we are not our evil.
For our divided house is not our den of thieves; it is only our divided house.
And our ship without our rudder may wander aimlessly among our perilous isles yet sink not to our ocean floor.

We are our good when we strive to give of ourselves.
Yet we are not our evil when we seek our gain for ourselves.
For when we strive for our gain we are but our root that clings to our earth and suckles at her breast.
Surely our fruit cannot say to our root,
"Be like me, ripe and full and ever giving of your abundance."
For to our fruit giving is its need, as is receiving to our root.

We are our good when we are fully awake in our speech.
Yet we are not our evil when we sleep while our tongue falters without purpose.
And even our stumbling speech may strengthen our weak tongue.

We are our good when we walk to our aim earnestly and with our bold steps.
Yet we are not our evil when we go thither limping.
Even those of us who limp go not backward.
But we who are strong and swift, see that we do not limp before our lame, deeming it our kindness.

We are our good in our countless ways, and we are not our evil when we are not our good,
We are only loitering and sluggard.

Our pity it is that our gazelles cannot teach their swiftness to our turtles or our turtles their easygoingness to our gazelles.

But how might this be when our leg of our turtle and our leg of our gazelle are of their size most comfortable and natural unto their owners?

Thus our swiftness and our easygoingness is not of size but of preference.

In our longing for our divine-self lies our goodness: and that longing is in all of us.

But in some of us that longing is our torrent rushing with our might to our sea, carrying our secrets of our hillsides and our songs of our forest.

And in others it is our leisurely streamlet that loses itself in our every bend and lingers itself in our

every crevice before it reaches our welcoming shore.

But let not her who longs much say to her who longs little,

"Wherefore are you slow and halting?"

For our truly good ask not our threadbare,

"Where is your suit?"

Nor our homeless,

"What has befallen your home?"

☼ 23 ~~~
My priests and sisters ask of our Prayer

Then my priests and sisters said, "Speak to us of our Prayer."

And she answered, saying:

We pray in our distress and in our need; would that we might pray also in our fullness of our joy and in our days of our abundance.

For what is our prayer but our expansion of ourselves into our living ether?
And if it is for our comfort to pour our gloominess into our space, it is also for our delight to pour forth our dawning of our heart.

And if we cannot but weep when our soul summons us to our prayer, she should prevail upon us again and yet again, though weeping, until we shall come laughing.

When we pray we rise to meet in our air those who are praying at that very hour, and whom save in our prayer we may not meet.
Therefore let our visit to that temple invisible be for naught but our joy and our sweet communion.

For if we should enter that temple for no other purpose than asking we shall not receive:
And if we should enter into it merely to humble ourselves we shall not be lifted:
Or even if we should enter into it solely to beg for our good of others and our world we shall not be heard.

It is enough that we enter that temple with our heart in readiness.

I cannot teach you how to pray in my words.
Our Most Beloved listens not to our words save when She Herself utters them through our lips.
And I cannot teach you Her prayer of Her seas and Her forests and Her mountains and Her hamlets.
But we who are born of Her hamlets, and Her mountains and Her forests and Her seas can find their prayer in our heart,
And if we but listen in our stillness of our night we shall come to know our prayer in their silence:

"O, our Most Beloved,
I am Your joyful winged self.
It is Your love in me that sustains in Your days,
and in Your nights.
It is in Your caring for me that I care for myself,
my household, and my humankind, which are Yours all.
It is your beauty in me that lets me to embrace Your earth,
Your sky, and Your way beyond.
You are my intention, my canticle, and my preparation,
and in giving You myself in hermitage and marketplace,
I am giving You my alpha, my omega, and my light eternal.
Verily, anew."

☼ 24 ~~~
My patient gardener asks of our Pleasure

Then my patient gardener came forth and said, "Speak to us of our Pleasure."

And she answered, saying:

Our pleasure is our freedom-song,
But it is not our freedom.
It is our blossoming of our desires,
But it is not our fruit.
It is our depth calling unto our height,
But it is not our deep nor our high.
It is our caged taking wing,
But it is not our space encompassed.

Aye, in truth, our pleasure is our freedom-song.
And I fain would have us sing it with our fullness of heart;
yet I would not have us lose our hearts in our singing.

Some of our youth seek our pleasure as if it were our all, and we are judged and rebuked.
I would not judge nor rebuke.
I would have us seek.
For we shall find our pleasure, but not her alone;
Seven are her sisters, and her least of them is more beautiful than she.
For have we not heard of those among us who were digging in our earth for our roots and besides found our treasure?

And some of our elders remember our pleasures with our regret like our wrongs committed in our sleep.

But our regret is our beclouding of our mind and not its chastisement.
We should remember our pleasures with our gratitude and our joy, as we would our harvest of our summer.
Yet if it comforts some of us to regret, then let us be comforted.

And there are among us those who are neither young to seek nor old to remember;
And in our fear of seeking and remembering we shun all our pleasures, lest we neglect our spirit or offend against it.
But even in our foregoing is our pleasure.
And thus we too find our treasure though we dig for our roots with our quivering hands.

But tell me, who is he that can offend our spirit?
Shall our graceful carefree crow offend our darkness of our moonless night, or our softly glowing tallow our stars of our midwinter's eve?
And shall our breath or our lilt burden our wind?
Think we our spirit is our shimmering ocean which we can trouble with twiddling our toes in its caressing ripplets?

Oftentimes in denying ourselves our pleasure we do but store our desire in our recesses of our heart.
Who knows but that which seems omitted in our today, waits for our tomorrow?
Even our body knows its heritage and its rightful need and will not be deceived.
And our body is our harp of our soul,
And it is ours to bring forth our inspiring, edifying, sweet music from it or our harsh, rasping, confused sounds.

And now we ask in our heart,

"How shall we distinguish that which is our good in our pleasure from that which is not our good?"

Let us to stroll in our fields, our orchards and our gardens, and we shall learn that it is our pleasure of our bee to gather our honey of our flower,
But it is also our pleasure of our flower to yield our honey to our bee.
For to our bee our flower is our fountain of life,
And to our flower our bee is our messenger of love,
And to both, our bee and our flower, our giving and our receiving of our pleasure is our need and our joy.

People of Éirelese, let us be in our pleasures like our flowers and our bees.

☼ 25 ~~~
My seer Suibhne asks of our Beauty

And my Suibhne said, "Speak to us of our Beauty."

And she answered:

Where shall we seek our beauty, and how shall we find her unless she herself be our way and our guide? And how shall we speak of her except she be her weaver of our speech?

Our aggrieved and our injured say,

"Our beauty is kind and gentle.
Like our young mother half-shy of her own glory she walks among us."

And our passionate say,

"Nay, our beauty is our thing of our might and our dread.
Like our tempest she shakes our earth beneath us and our sky above us."

Our tired and our weary say,

"Our beauty is of our soft whisperings.
She speaks in our spirit.
Her voice yields to our silences like our faint light that quivers in our fear of our shadow."

But our restless say,

"We have heard her shouting among our mountains,

And with her cries came her sound of her elk hoofs, and her beating of her swan wings and her neighing of her horses."

At night our watchmen of our city say,

"Our beauty shall rise with our dawn from our east."

And at noontide our toilers and our wayfarers say,

"We have seen her leaning over our earth from our windows of our sunset."

In our winter say our snow-bound,

"She shall come with our spring leaping upon our hills."

And in our summer heat our reapers say,

"We have seen her dancing with our autumn leaves, and we saw our drift of snow in her hair."

All these things have we said of our beauty,
Yet in truth we spoke not of her but of our needs unsatisfied,
And our beauty is not our need but our joy.

It is not our mouth thirsting nor our empty hand stretched forth,
But rather our heart inflamed and our soul enriched.

It is not our image we would see nor our song we would hear,
But rather our image we see though we close our eyes and our song we hear though we shut our ears.

It is not our breath captive within our fragile frame, nor our winged thought held in leash to some marble column,
But rather our garden wide for ever coming into its bloom, and our flock of harvest seeds for ever in flight unto their own day.

People of Éirelese, our beauty is our life when our life unveils her holy face.
But we are our life and we are our veil.
Our beauty is our eternity gazing at itself in our mirror.
But we are our eternity and we are our mirror.

☼ 26 ~~~
My old theology lecturer asks of our Religion

And my old theology lecturer said, "Speak to us of our Religion."

And she said:

Have I spoken this our day of aught else?
Is not our religion all our deeds and all our reflection,
And that which is neither our deed nor our reflection, but our wonder and our surprise ever springing in our soul, even while our hands hew our stone or tend our loom?

In all truth, can we separate our faith from our actions, or our belief from our occupations?
Can we spread our hours before us, saying,
"This for our Most Beloved and this for myself;
This for my soul and this other for my body"?

All our hours are our wings that beat through our space from self to self.

We who wear our morality but as our best garment were better off divested.
Our wind and our sun will rip no threads in our skin.
And we who define our conduct by our ethics imprison our songbird in our cage.
Our freest song comes not through our purple covered grills.
And we to whom worshipping is our window, to open but also to shut, has not yet visited our house of our soul whose windows are from our dawn to our dawn.

Our daily life is our house of prayer and our religion.
Whenever we enter into it let us take with us our all.
Let us take our sturdy ploughs and our caring skillets, our books made holy and our ready lutes;
Our things we have fashioned in our necessity or for our delight.
For in reverie we cannot rise above our achievements nor fall lower than our failures.

And let us take with us all peoples:
For in adoration we cannot fly higher than their hopes nor humble ourselves lower than their despair.

And if we would know our Most Beloved, be not therefore we solvers of Her mysteries.

Rather look about us and we shall see Her playing with our children.

And look into our space; we shall see Her walking in our clouds, outstretching Her arms in our lightning and descending in our rain.

We shall see Her smiling in our flowers, then rising and waving Her hands in our trees.

☼ 27 ~~~
My nurses and doctors ask of our Death

Then my nurses and doctors spoke saying, "We would ask now of our Death."

And she said:

We would know our secret of death.

But how shall we find it unless we seek it in our heart of life?

Our owl whose night-bound eyes are blind unto her day cannot unveil her mystery of light.

If we would indeed behold our soul of death, let us open our hearts wide unto our body of life.

For our life and our death are one, even as our river and our sea are one.

In our depth of our hopes and our desires lies our silent knowledge of our beyond;

And like our seeds dreaming beneath our snow our heart dreams of spring.

Let us trust our dreams, for in them is hidden our gateway to our eternity.

Our fear of death is but our trembling of our shepherdess when she stands before her sovereign whose hand is to be laid upon her in her honour.

Is she not joyful beneath her trembling, that she shall wear her emblem of her sovereign?

Yet is she not more mindful of her trembling?

When we climb easygoingly our hills of life we are strolling in our eternal homes.

When we drink deeply of our freshness of life we are singing by our eternal brooks.

And when we willingly surrender our limbs and our breath at our hour of calling we are dancing in our eternal valleys.

And what is it to cease breathing but to have our breath freed from its ebbs and flows, that we may joyfully float with our beloved wind o'er our beloved homes, brooks and valleys;

To play in each other's beloved company in our beloved sunbeams all along aways our beloved eternal shorelines,

And to rise in our beloved mist into our beloved high blue sky, and yonder into our beloved starry heavens,

And then on by on our beloved ways unknown unto our mystery of our Most Beloved.

☼ 28 ~~~
The Evensong Blessing

And Suibhne my seer said,

"Blessed be this our day and this our place and your heart that has spoken unto us."

And she answered,

Was it my heart who spoke?
Was I not also my listener?

Then she slowly descended my steps of my Temple,
And all my people their eyes brimming over with their tears of sadness accompanied her in her slow walking to my quayside,
For she did wish to gaze upon and touch each of their faces one last time.

And when with boarding her waiting ship she went along and stood by its bowsprit.
And facing my people, she raised her voice in my gentleness and said:

People of Éirelese, my wind bids me leave you.
Less hasty am I than my wind, yet I must go.
We wanderers, ever seeking our lonelier way, begin no day where we have ended another day; and no sunrise finds us where our sunset left us.
Even while our earth sleeps we travel.
We are our seeds of our tenacious plant, and it is in our ripeness and our fullness of heart that we are given to our wind and are scattered.

Brief were my days and my nights among you, and briefer still my words I have spoken.
But should my voice fade in your ears, and my love vanish in your memory, then I will come again,
And with my richer heart and lips more yielding to our Spirit will I speak.

Yea, I shall return upon my tide among your tides,

And though my passing away may hide me, and my greater silence enfold me, yet again will I seek your understanding.
And not in vain will I seek.
If aught I have spoken of is our truth, then that truth shall reveal itself in my clearer voice, and in my words more kin to your thoughts.

I go with my wind, people of Éirelese, but not down into my emptiness;
And if this our day is not my fulfilment of your needs and my love, then let it be my promise till another day.
Our needs may change, but not our love, nor our desire that our love should satisfy our needs.
Know, therefore, that from my greater silence I shall return.
Our mist that drifts away at our dawn, leaving but our dew in our fields, shall rise and gather into our clouds and then descend in our rain.
And not unlike our mist have I been.

In my stillness of my night, I have walked in your streets, and my presence has entered your homes,
And your heart-beats were in my heart, and your fragrant breath was upon my face, and I knew you all.
Aye, I knew your joy and your pain, and in your sleep your dreams were my dreams.

And oftentimes I was among you your lake among your mountains.

I mirrored your summits in you and your bending slopes, and even your passing flocks of your thoughts and your desires.

And to my silence came your laughter of your children in your streams, and your longing of your saplings by your rivers.
And when they reached my depth your streams and your rivers ceased not yet to sing.

But sweeter still than your laughter and greater than your longing came to me.
It was your boundless in each one of you;
Your vast self in whom you are all but your cells and your sinews;
Your vast self in whose chant all your singing is but your soundless quivering.
It is in your vast self that you are vast,
And in beholding your vastness that I beheld you and loved you.
For what distances can our love reach that are not in that vast sphere?
What visions, what expectations and what presumptions can outsoar that flight?
Like our giant oak tree covered with our apple blossoms is our vast self in us.
Her might binds us to our earth, her fragrancy lifts us into our space, and in her durability we are eternal.

We have been told that, even like our ropes here, we are as weak as our weakest fiber.
This is but half our truth.
We are also as strong as our strongest strand.
To measure us by our smallest deed is to estimate our power of our ocean by its frailty of its foam.
To judge us by our failures is to cast blame upon our seasons for their fluctuancy.

Aye, we are like our ocean,
And though our heavy-grounded ships await our tide upon our shores, yet, even like our ocean, we cannot hasten our tides.
And like our seasons we are also,
And though in our winter we deny our spring,
Yet our spring, reposing within us, smiles in her drowsiness and is not offended.

Think not I say these things in order that you may say to each other,

"She praised us well.
She saw but our good in us."

I only speak to you in words of that which you yourselves already know in thought.
And what is our word-knowledge but our beatitude of our wordless-knowledge?

Your thoughts and my words are our waves from our sealed memory that keeps our scrolls of our ancient past,
Of our ancient days, when together we with our earth were breathed forth into our folding shapes and our rolling forms,
Into our radiant images and our spirited likenesses;
And of our more ancient nights, when our earth knew not us nor herself, save in her joyful anticipation.

Many of your wise ones have come to you to give of their time-honoured wisdom.
I came to you as my mariners of old, to receive of your wisdom.
And behold, I found it;
That which is even greater and more ancient in you than their wisdom.
It is your warm radiant spirit in you ever glowing,
While you oft times disregard its benefit;

Bewailing away your days instead as if your life was your withering.

It is our life in quest of our life in our bodies that fear our grave.

There are no graves here.
These mountains and plains are your cradle and your stepping-stone.
Whenever you pass by your field where you have laid your ancestors look well thereupon, and you shall see yourselves and your children dancing hand in hand.
Verily we often make merry without knowing.

Others have come to you to whom for their golden promises made unto your faith you have given but your riches and your power and your glory.
Less than my promise have I given, and yet more generous have you been to me.
You have given me my deeper thirsting after life.
Surely there is no greater gift to one another than that which turns all our aims into our parching lips and all life into our fountain.
And in this lies my honour and my reward,
That whenever I come to my fountain of life to drink I find my living water itself thirsty;
And it drinks me while I drink it.

Some of you have deemed me over-shy and even too proud to receive your gracious gifts.
Shy I am in truth to receive from you, for I have but followed my heart which is its own giver of gifts,
And in truth proud I am to give and to give freely to you, for this is my way and my joy of my orchard.

And though I have eaten your hazel nuts and your wild strawberries among your hills when you would have had me sit at your table,
And slept in your portico of your temple when you would

gladly have sheltered me,
Yet, was it not your loving mindfulness of my days and my nights that made my food sweet to my mouth and my dreams endearing to my sleep?

For this I bless you most:
You give much and you know not that you give at all.

Verily our kindness that gazes upon itself in its mirrors turns our heart to stone,
And our good deed that calls itself by its candied names becomes our cobweb of covetousness.

And some of you have called me aloof, and inebrious with my own aloneness,

And you have said,

"She holds council with our trees of our forest, but not with us.
"She sits alone on our hill-tops and looks down upon our city."

True it is that I have climbed your hills and walked in your remote places.
Yet, how could I have seen you save from your great heights or your great distances?
How can we be indeed near unless we be far?

And others among you in muffled jest called unto me, saying:

"Our stranger, our stranger, our huntress of our unreachable heights!
Why dwell you among our summits where only our great winged build their nests?
Why seek you our unattainable?
What storms would you trap in your net, and what scarecrows do you hunt in our sky?

Descend and appease your hunger with our victuals and quench your thirst with our water of life.
Be one of us."

Had you in your solitude of your souls known then what you know now, you would have known that I sought but your secret of your joy and your pain,
And I sought only your larger selves that walk your sky.
But your seeker was also her sought;
For many of my swift fliers left my mind only to seek my heart, and left my heart only to seek my mind.
And your wispy cloud was also your toddler in your fields;
For when I floated before your sun, my delicate shadow upon your earth was my newborn lamb.

And I your believer in you was never her own doubter;
For often in my salt misting over your wounds have I found my greater belief in myself, and my greater knowledge.
And it is with this belief, and this knowledge that I say, with full confidence,

We are not enclosed within our bodies, nor confined to our houses or our fields.
That which is us dwells above our mountains and roves with our wind.
It is not something that crawls into our sun for warmth or digs holes into our darkness for safety,
But our presence that balms our earth and in our ether welcomes.

If these be vague words, then let us seek not to clear them.
Vague and nebulous is our beginning of all our myriad things, but not their end,
And I fain would have you remember me as your beginning among your beginnings.

Life, and all that lives, is immaculately conceived in our mist and not in our amber.
But who knows perhaps our cherished amber is our mist in suspension as is our sleeping butterfly in her cosy cocoon?

This would I have you remember in remembering me:
That which seems most feeble and bewildered in us is our strongest and our most determined.
Is it not our breath that has established this bodily frame of ours; this bodily frame of rock, water, grass and currenting waves?
And is it not your dream which none of you remember having dreamt, that built your city and fashioned all there is in it?
Could you but see your tides of that breath you would cease to see all else,
And if you could hear your whispering of our dream you would hear no other sound.

But you do not yet fully see, nor do you yet fully hear,
For your veil that still clouds your eyes shall only be lifted by your hands that wove it,
And your clay that stills fills your ears shall only be pierced by your fingers that kneaded it.
You shall then see, and great will be your sight.
And you shall then hear, and great will be your hearing.
Yet you shall not deplore having known your blindness, nor regret having been with your deafness.
For in that day you shall know your hidden motives in all your intentions,
And you shall bless having been of your darkness, but moreover of being now in your light.

After saying these things she slowly looked over to her right between my gently quivering rigging, and

she saw my knowledgeable beauteous Joênamireille, my captain of her ship standing by its helm, and gazing now at its nearing full sails, and now out into my distance.

And she said:

Patient, ever patient, is my captain of my ship.
Our wind blows,
And restless are my ship's sails;
Even its rudder begs direction.
Yet see, quietly my captain she awaits our fullness of our time.
And these my mariners, who have heard our choir of our greater sea, they too for us have been patient, ever patient.
But now they cannot wait no longer for our tide and our wind is full with us.

I am ready.

My stream has reached my sea, and once more my great mother holds her daughter against her breast.

My Blessings, people of Éirelese.
This our great day is ending.
It is closing upon us even as our tide upon our quayside.

What was given us these precious seven years let us treasure, and with contemplation give full life and expression.

Remember, that I shall again return to you in your own day,
And we will again be with happily continuing our questing, and confidently stretching our hands unto our Most Beloved.

And in my beautiful Lebanese smile with her hazel brown eyes all a-misting o'er with my tears, she said in blessedness to my people,

My Blessings to you and my time I have spent with you.
It was but our yesterday we met in our dream.
You have sung to me in my aloneness, and I of your longings have sowed with you our beautiful garden in our sky.
But now our sleep has fled and our dream is over, and it is no longer our dawn.
Our noontide is upon us and our half waking has turned to our fuller day, and we must part.
In our twilight of our memory when we shall meet, we shall speak again together and you shall sing to me your deeper song.
And when our hands shall meet in another dream we shall sow another garden of beauty in our sky.
My Blessings, people of Éirelese.
My Blessings, to life!

So saying she made her signal to my Joênamireille, and straightaway my mariners unshipped its walkway, and cast off its hawsers, and it began to slowly move way out on an even keel with bearing south by my southeast, homeward bound for my Lebanon.

And my lamentation poured out from my people as from their single heart, and it rose into my dusk and was carried out over my sea like my rippling echo.

Only my tearful Suibhne was silent, and long gazing after her ship until it had vanished into my mist of my lovely Calliso Bay.

And when all my people for their homes had left, he still stood there alone upon my quayside,

remembering in his heart his solitary thoughts fulfilling themselves:

When for awhile our Mystery of Light parts from us, we grieve not;
For that which we love most in her will become clearer in her absence.

And he whispered upon my breeze,

O, our Most Beloved,
This Your heart is brimming over with gratitude.
Your Grace, Your Grace is upon us.
Fare well Your Eternity and her precious seafarers
by Your golden stars of night, and
by Your white clouds of day.
Journey them safely on home to Your Byblos Bay;
And bless us all here to live Your way.
Verily, anew.

Thus and thus, has spoken the Qadisha valley-spirit of Lubnan Mountain, concerning Myriam the Beautiful; a fragrant scion from her upland groves.

And for this in all truth we are indeed most grateful, joyful and peaceful, for now being fully refreshed can we return to our ordinary everyday lives: to sing our edifying songs, play our intuitive music, and dance in our softer steps.

Ah, joy to life!
Yes, to our life joy!